



BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, May 17, 2004, for the purpose of conducting a final review of the changes proposed to the FY 2005 budget.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Jeff Williams, City Treasurer; David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; Deirdre Allen, Finance; Kenny Hall, Carolyn Clemens, and Bill Phelan, Public Works; Chief Jim Craze, Lts. Dan O'Neil and Tom Kemp, and Sgt. Jim Parker, Police Department; Liz Park, Greenbelt CARES; Hank Irving, Julie McHale and Joe McNeal, Recreation Department; Celia W. Craze, Planning & Community Development; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Craig Rich, Greenbelt F.O.P.; Dorrie Bates, Coop; Sheldon Goldberg, GEAC; Bob Zugby, GATE; Julia Eichhorst, FOGM; Leonie Penney, FORA; and Jim Giese, Greenbelt News Review.

Referencing his memo dated May 14, 2004, which provided the most recent budget update, Mr. McLaughlin asked how much of the \$100,000 reserve appropriation Council wanted to make available. He explained that these monies are part of the ongoing revenue stream, but he recommended that at least \$20,000 be held out for unexpected needs over the year. There was general agreement to use up to \$80,000. Mr. Roberts said he would prefer to use that to offset the proposed tax increase. Mr. Putens said he agreed.

Also referencing Mr. McLaughlin's memo, Mayor Davis noted the necessity to increase the amount budgeted for electricity by 16% (\$37,000) because of the projected increase in electricity rates.

Council then reviewed the proposed FY 2005 budget and changes:

General Government: Bob Zugby, president of the GATE board, spoke to request that their \$8,700 budget reduction be made whole. He said GATE is not a vendor to the City so that it is not possible to provide less of a product. In addition, GATE accepted not receiving an increase last year because funds were tight, but it was understood this was not to set a precedent. Instead, the proposed cut for this year would represent about 10% of their budget. He asked that Council at least close this gap. Mayor Davis said the \$8,700 was on Mr. Herling's list to restore and that she agreed. Ms. Mach suggested starting with \$5,000 instead, and there was general agreement to do that.

Under this category, Council also agreed to: 1) assign the Community Resource Advocate position to Social Services; and 2) provide the requested \$600 contribution to the Washington Area Housing Trust Fund.

Planning and Community Development: The Mayor said that the first issue was deciding what to do about increasing inspection fees. The City Manager had indicated a preference for phasing this in over a period of years. Ms. Craze said she would prefer to get the pain over at once rather than prolonging it over a longer period. She said while the costs of running the program had gone up, the fees had not been raised since 1999. She said the goal was to cover the costs and make the program self-supporting. In response to a question from Mr. Putens, she clarified that she was suggesting an increase of 60%, from \$50 to \$80 for inspection of a rental apartments and from \$100 to \$160 for "owner-rented" units.

There was considerable discussion of this issue. Mayor Davis said she was reluctant to hit apartments with such a big increase and that she thought an increasing number of owners were renting their units. Ms. Craze said the data did not support the latter assertion, with about 5% of the individually-owned housing stock being rental at any given time. Mr. Putens said he thought the City should discourage, not encourage, owner-rentals and that he had less objection to increasing that category than apartments. Ms. Mach agreed, saying she did not wish to encourage rentals by owners. Mr. Roberts also agreed. Mayor Davis said the increase would not function to discourage the owner, who would simply pass it on to the renter. In response to questions from Mr. Herling, Ms. Craze said while the City's fees had been in line with surrounding communities in 1999, the others had raised theirs since; and that it was the smaller owners rather than the larger ones like AIMCO who were most likely to object to increases. Mr. Putens added that he thought the program should be user-supported, not subsidized by the taxpayers.

Mr. Putens suggested a \$25 increase on both, to \$75 and \$125, but Mr. McLaughlin pointed out that this put a heavier burden on apartments. Mr. Herling suggested a \$20/\$35 increase, which represents a 40% increase for apartments and a 35% increase for owner-rentals, and this proposal was generally agreed upon.

The department's three proposed staff additions were discussed. Mr. Roberts said he categorically was not in favor of creating any new positions at this time unless they paid for themselves. He said that increasing positions and programs without increasing revenue sources for them was exactly what was creating the structural problem with the budget. There seemed to be agreement among the rest of Council to increase the office associate position to full-time (\$26,500) and to add a code enforcement inspector (\$40,000) who would function half-time as needed in animal control.

Public Safety: The Mayor noted that even though the COPS program had not funded the half-salary for the police officer to be shared with AIMCO for Springhill Lake, the Police Department would still like to see the City provide the \$40,000 for its share. Mr. Putens asked if the planned rehab would have any effect on this need. Chief Craze responded that the need exists now and that the rehab project would take years to play out, assuming it occurs. Ms. Mach said she would like to support this request, since it overlaps with needs or problems that have been identified by others: e.g., safety at the Springhill Lake Recreation Center. Other Councilmembers were willing to support this

but not sure enough funds would be available at the end of the day. Mr. Roberts said this was a purpose to which he would be willing to assign \$40,000 from the reserve appropriation.

There was considerable discussion of the red-light camera, which staff proposed to disconnect and move to another location after the alternatives were studied. Mr. Roberts said he did not want to disconnect it, since it apparently had succeeded in reducing problems at this intersection. Mayor Davis said she had been the swing vote on keeping the camera last year; this year, however, it had been demonstrated to her that this intersection was no longer dangerous and that the camera was no longer needed. She suggested leaving the housing for the camera up. Mr. Herling agreed removing it but leaving the housing up would be acceptable.

Mr. McLaughlin said he wished to clarify that "from day 1" it had been apparent that there were not problems at this intersection, and it was for this reason that staff has continued to recommend eliminating this camera and the cost of maintaining it. He added that this year improved technology had made it possible to suggest moving it to a different type of location. Mr. Putens said he was willing to move the camera to a more dangerous intersection, but that he preferred to leave it connected till it could be moved; he suggested the new light at Lakecrest and Greenbelt might be an appropriate place to move the camera. Ms. Craze commented that, since the new traffic light will probably not be added to the state's TCP until November, its installation is probably at least two years away, which would delay reassigning the camera for at least that long. Ms. Mach said she agreed with the Mayor that the camera should be removed, since the intersection is safe, and the camera is serving no purpose at that location. Mr. Herling, Mr. Roberts, and Mr. Putens agreed to keep it up.

Council agreed the Lieutenants could be retitled as Captains. Mr. Putens said he would like to see the possibility kept open of using the lieutenant position at the level 15 as a subordinate to the captain as well as a twin for the captain position.

Social Services: Everyone was in agreement to support funding of the Community Resource Advocate position. Regarding replacing the services of the county employee providing counseling for seniors, the suggestion was made that perhaps this individual or someone else might want to do this work on a contingency basis. Later in the meeting it was agreed to add the \$13,000 for the ACE Reading Club staff person and the \$24,000 for the additional half-time Crisis Intervention Counselor.

Roosevelt Center Proposals: Council discussed several proposals put forth by Mr. Herling related to Roosevelt Center and agreed that they would need to be more fully developed to be considered for the budget. Mayor Davis said the possibility of a marketing director for the City had been discussed before, but Council had always thought other positions were more critically needed. Mr. Putens suggested that if the merchants could contribute to the cost, it might be more feasible, and Mayor Davis suggested raising the issue with them at the upcoming work session. Mr. Putens said he had a problem with the notion of subsidizing private business with taxpayers' dollars; Mr. Roberts later expressed agreement with this sentiment. Mayor Davis said at a minimum such a position would have to support the whole City. In response to questions from Mayor Davis and Mr. Putens, Mr. Herling said the idea of the park ranger or code enforcement officer at the Center full-time would be to develop a relationship

with the site, much as a School Resource Officer does with a school. Mayor Davis, Mr. Putens, and Ms. Mach all agreed that these ideas were not adequately developed to deal with in this year's budget.

Public Works: Council approved a change in policy that would require purchase of paper bags or use of yard bins for removal of leaves and other yard waste beginning next year. Council agreed to review a possible change in requirements for placement of trash cans for collection. All Councilmembers except Mr. Roberts agreed to proposals to expand contractual services for tree removal and landscaping. Regarding a request for additional facilities maintenance staff, there was agreement to add contractual help at \$30,000, with additional staff to be added later. Regarding planters for Roosevelt Center, there was some support from Council, but Mayor Davis objected that they would be very high maintenance items if they were not to turn into trash cans, and Ms. Craze suggested that any change of this nature should be studied in the context of the whole plan for the Center.

Recreation: Mr. McLaughlin said an additional \$3,300 had been agreed to for contribution groups. Mayor Davis said she supported the stage lighting for the Community Center at up to \$10,000 but thought the stage risers and backdrop should wait. In lieu of the proposed additional recreation facilities supervisor, Mr. McNeal suggested an additional coordinator position instead. All Councilmembers except Mr. Roberts agreed to that alternative at \$35,000.

There was discussion of classifying non-classified positions and specifically of classifying the visual and ceramics arts specialist positions and making them one full-time job that could be split out again later if the individual currently holding both jobs were to leave. Mr. Putens expressed concern that the City's system was not consistent or equitable. Mr. Roberts was concerned with the equity of addressing some positions but not others. Ms. Mach suggested looking at the whole situation more comprehensively, and, to that end, it was agreed to take it to work session in the fall.

Miscellaneous: Council agreed to restore the \$10,000 in matching for the City's NEH Challenge Grant to the Museum. Mayor Davis supported restoring the reduced leave buy-back benefit, but Ms. Mach, Mr. Putens, and Mr. Herling said they did not.

Regarding the transfer to the Replacement and Building Capital Reserve Funds, Mayor Davis said she would like to find a way to fund each with at least \$15,000, but there was no money left. She said she was ready to increase the tax rate by another penny if necessary. Ms. Mach said she would support the additional increase as well. Mr. Putens suggested restoring the rest of the GATE balance if the extra penny was funded, but there was not agreement on doing so. There was agreement to raise the extra penny of tax and to put \$25,000 into each of the two funds, with the balance of about \$36,000 remain in the reserve appropriation.

Other Business

Council reviewed the MOU to be sent to County Councilmember Peters for the Schools Administration and the letter to be sent to Chief Blackwell regarding Fire Department staffing. They also reviewed a letter to be sent in response to the letter from Norman Rivera regarding Greenbelt Station. Mr. Roberts opposed sending a response, but Mr.

McLaughlin explained the response was directed to Congressman Hoyer, not Mr. Rivera. Mayor Davis said she thought it was important to convey that outside influences had been exerted.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk